

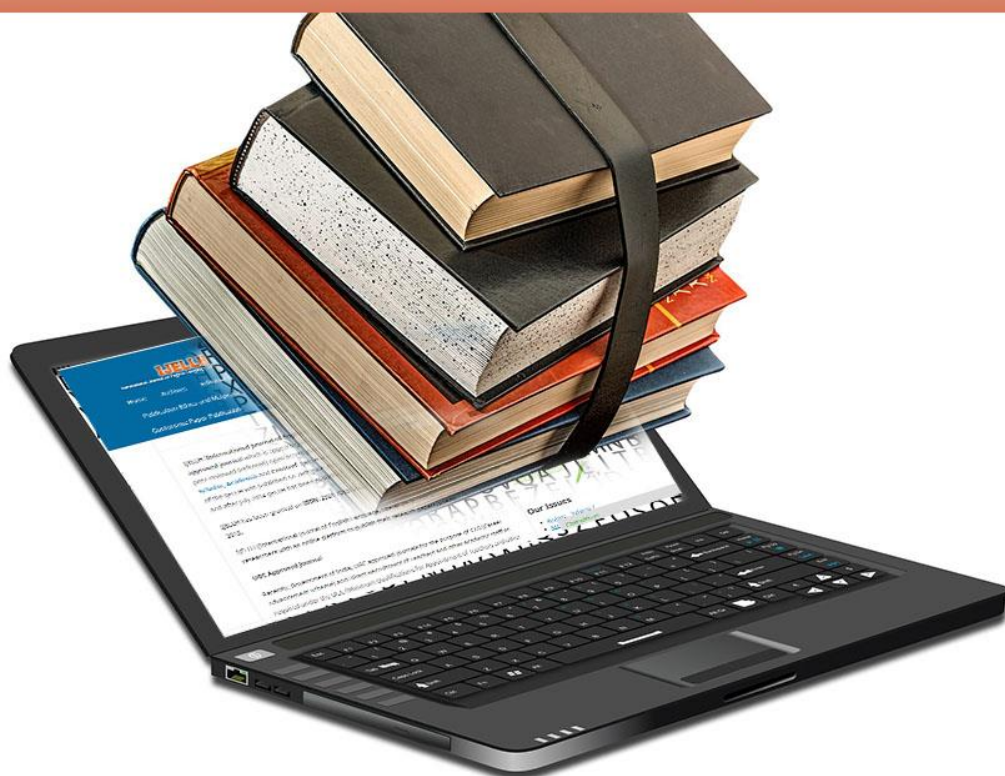
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Dr. S.S.Kavitha

Assistant Professor of English

PG and Research Department of English

Thiagarajar College

Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

sskavitharajmohan@gmail.com

Determination as a Conflict: A Study of the Novella *the Arena*

Abstract

C.S. Chellappa's novella *Vaadivaasal* which has been translated as *Arena* by N. Kalyanaraman flawlessly catches the social importance of jallikattu in the life of provincial Tamil Nadu, regardless of whether the 'convention' is inseparably bound up with feudalism, standing hierarchies, manliness and male centric society. In Chellappa's line of thought, the arena produces unsure and even lethal results for its human members yet not for the bulls. However, the destiny that anticipates for both of them can be capricious. In the name of eulogizing, the subaltern is neither allowed to speak nor to cry. A kind of false pride is injected into the subconscious of the subaltern. The injected self, attunes the subaltern to obey, to remain submissive and be obedient.

Keywords: Vaadivaasal, jallikattu, subaltern consciousness, popular historiography.

The History of Subaltern social group is necessarily fragmented and episodic.

-Antonio Gramsci.

Subaltern studies the subaltern as writer of an impossible historical possibility.

-Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak.

No one would forget 2017 Jallikattu protest that shook Tamil Nadu where lakhs of youth gathered at various parts of Tamil Nadu with the sole aim of protecting Jallikattu, sallikattu, Eruthazhuvuthal – a valiant sport activity of Tamils that is in vogue since ancient days. The educated youth who would not have participated or witnessed the sport joined hands together against the ban on Jallikattu as fought unanimously for the restoration of the antique culture and tradition, which was slowly descending into oblivion.

Anyone hoping to comprehend the sport of jallikattu in the Tamil literature and the enthusiasm the game has exhibited over the state need not look further except to read the novel *Arena* which is a translation of the novel *Vaadivaasal* by C.S. C.S.Chellappa.

Vaadivaasal is the restricted door through which bull are discharged during Jallikattu, a provincial game of Tamils held every year in various parts of Tamil Nadu, to commemorate the harvest festival Pongal. Pongal is a thanks giving celebration where individuals offer their heartfelt thanks to all natural elements and forces such as sun, bullocks and animals that that aid them in agrarian exercises.

During Jallikattu young tamers pound upon the bulls and endeavor to overwhelm them. Other than the bravado connected to it, the material fascination is the cash prize and gold coins that are tied to the horns of the bulls. In spite of the fact that the objective of Jallikkattu is not to kill any living being, Jallikattu has its own dark side wherein the medieval masters wielded capacity that ruins both the life of the tamers who are usually 'the underprivileged' or 'the other' or 'the subaltern' and of course the protagonist of the event - the bulls.

Any culture and tradition of a race reverberates with pros and cons that favours the powerful and disfavors the poor. Jallikattu, one of the cultural sports of the Tamils, is no exception.

Author's Introduction:

C.S.Chellappa's novella *Vaadivaasal* written during the 1940s denotes the first occasion when the conventional game of jallikattu discovers space in current writing. The tale is a great story of strategic maneuver in the Tamil Nadu country side, a story in which the primitive social relations that support the local economy and the subaltern castes figure implicitly even as the narrative is driven by latter's attempts to compete with each other and with animals in the ritual taming of bulls.

The novella flawlessly catches the social noteworthiness of jallikattu in the life of provincial Tamil Nadu, regardless of whether the 'convention' is inseparably bound up with feudalism, standing hierarchies, manliness and male centric society. In Chellappa's line of thought, the arena produces unsure and even lethal results for its human members, yet not for the bulls. However, the destiny that is anticipated after can be capricious.

Subaltern Studies

Revolt against the frontier rule was examined. Minor protections from pilgrim rule which were not in any manner seen in the official and great accounts were recorded. Revolt was likewise examined. There was a noteworthy change in political culture with new elucidations of the national past. Nationality turned into the focal point of the investigation. There were questions identified with culture and patriotism and questions like "what is the job of culture and patriotism?" are raised. Also, what is the connection among states and well-known politics?

At the point when subaltern examinations were developing, researchers were composing two sorts of chronicles. The main sort of history was loaded up with individuals' history with local culture and insurrection, the second kind of history was authentic history loaded up with elites and political parties. Subaltern Studies had begun discussions about

rebellion and nationality. Subaltern researchers were attempting to explore the detachment between authority patriotism and well known patriotism.

In this new context, the nation was being reconfigured, reimagined, re-theorised. Subaltern studies became an original site for a new kind of history from below, a people's history free of national constraints, a post nationalist reimagining of the Indian nation on the underside at the margins, outside nationalism (Ludden 12).

Subaltern Studies rejected authority and nationalism which seemed to have received worldwide attention. It emerged as the primary universal collaborative work to have a continued effect on the South Asian Studies. Subaltern Studies started to have another facelift with another phonetic and artistic turn. Social investigations expanded noticeably, rather it transformed itself into social governmental issues. The disappointments and betrayals of Modernity, Positivisms and Enlightenment progressed toward becoming explanations behind deconstructing cultural power.

Subaltern Studies imagined a hypothesis of subaltern opposition and it has additionally reexamined subalternity. It started as a demonstration of dismissal and the look for the identity of subalternity turned into an oddity. Old terms were given, new meanings and historical studies marked a new beginning. Domination, subordination, hegemony, resistance, revolt and other old concepts which were the contents of Post-colonial studies were to be subalternised. Additionally, politics and representation became the two aspects of subalternity.

The subalternity of the peasant was "materialised by the structure of property" institutionalised by law and purified by religion. These materialisation, standardisation and sanctification can be treated as constituents which go into the creation of subalternity of the subalterns. Resistance in any form is a demonstration to demolish the signs which have classified its very presence as an individual from a subaltern gathering. All the historical

confirmations point towards this reality. The rebellions were constantly considered as unconstrained and unpremeditated. However, this is an opposite view to this prevalent sentiment of subaltern insurgence. "Insurgency, in other words, was a motivated and conscious undertaking on the part of the rural masses" (Guha II:2)

In spite of the fact that the defiance is a cognizant demonstration, this demonstration has not been seen by literature of history composed on the subaltern. The current historiography is fulfilled to manage the subaltern as "an empirical individual" or "an individual from a class". The subaltern isn't considered as an element and is fundamentally overlooked that the person's will and reason which establish the praxis which is known as subaltern insubordination. Most of the prominent historiography considers these rebellions as natural wonders. The historiography explains this demonstration of revolt of the subaltern as variables of practical and political hardship. It does not pay any regard to the subaltern awareness.

Picchi

The protagonist of Vaadivaasal, Picchi is a victim of Zameen's vanity and pride. The novella starts with an initiation of Pattaiya, the old man who reels out in length about the supremacy of the Zameendar and his property Kaari, a formidable symbol to reckon with.

The bull restraining challenge Chellayi Jallikattu, named after the town god, that happens in Periyapatti Zameen is visited by two young fellows Picchi and Marudhan from Usillanoor, a town that lies in the east. The novella rotates around the happenings of an evening and as the men and bulls touch base on the scene, the dramatization including human feelings, frivolity, want, brotherhood and generosity unfurls. With an elderly person nearly as a choric character, the novella discusses the demise of Picchi's father Ambulithevan. He had been gored and eventually the injuries led to his death several years prior in his endeavor to

tame Kaari, a Vadipuram bull possessed by the Periyapatti Zameen. Picchi is presently at the equivalent jallikattu to recover the lost pride of his father Ambulithevan – a type of retribution. His dad had let him know before he breathed his last, “Picchi, you must ...this Kaari...donkey.” (*Vaadivasaal* 28)

When Picchi reveals the fact that he is the son of Ambulithevan and his aim is to tame Kaari, Pattaiya, a subaltern, speaks great about the landlord and narrates in such a way that the Zameen is so powerful who has the capacity to possess great things whether it is human beings or animals. Pattatiya elaborates on the famous tamer Murugu, another property of the Zameen.

“This Kaari bull belongs to our master, the brave and mighty Periyapatti Zameendar who has planted his flag of conquest in all the fourteen worlds and all the eight directions.” (*Vaadivasaal* 32-33) Periyapatti Zameen entry and his behaviour would remind that the colonial attitude of the powerful which continues to prevail even today in interior parts of the villages. “The tradition of entering the Zameendar’s bull has been continuing for generations, didn’t you know that.” (*Vaadivasaal* 12).

“When the sub collector and superintendent come here, they’ll sit next to him. Otherwise, not even a dog of an outsider can get close enough to lick that stage. Prime honours are reserved for the Zameendar, a practice observed from generation to generation, from the time of his forefathers” (*Vaadivasaal* 14)

The beast Kaari has an identity and people remember it. The beast has a name and it is remembered as not less than an epic hero but no one remembers the name of the tamer Ambulithevan who has lost his life in taming the indomitable Kaari. It is hard to say if *Vaadivaasal* is about Picchi or Kaari but it is surely about pride especially the hurt pride of both the animal and the human. There is admiration for both and in the denouement, there is amusement and pain.

The author introduces Kaari on par with an epic hero. “The Kaari stood majestically at the wicket gate. The animal’s battened, glistening black hump jutted impressively above the neck-high wooden enclosure. Springing fork-like from the edges of the mound on its forehead, its two sharply pointed horns with a small hook-like curve at each tip glittered and shone impressively. Kaari, with its head lowered and eyes downcast, it stepped forward confidently and slowly, hump subtly undulating and horns swaying from side to side, came halfway out of the wicket gate and after casting sidelong glances at the anaimarams on either side as a precaution, reached the centre of the vaadivaasal and stood there. Look how it’s standing there, like a falcon. If this bull runs away too like all the other donkeys, then what ... If there is ever a bull that will stand its ground and gore the tamer, it’s this one...

(*Vaadivasaal* 61)

In the name of eulogising, the subaltern is neither allowed to speak nor cry. A kind of false pride is injected into the subconscious of the subaltern. The injected self, attunes the subaltern to obey, to remain submissive and be obedient. When Picchi’s eyes are welled with tears, Pattaiya says that tears are not suitable for a warrior caste. “Neither man nor beast should shed tears in the vaadivasaal. It does not befit your warrior caste- that too fortunate enough to have Ambuli as his father.” (*Vaadivasaal* 22)

The colonial attitude of the powerful makes the subaltern to remain dumb. Gayathri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” outrightly says that subaltern cannot speak and even if they make an attempt it is not paid heed to making the subalterns’ words as mere murmurings.

Picchi with both arms folded across his chest, stands humbly at the wicket gate, looks up at the Zameendar on the stage, raises both hands together above his head and says ‘my obeisance, master’. The Zameendar threw down a five-rupee note, which floated through the air to reach Picchi. ... bowed again to the Zameendar. (*Vaadivasaal* 46)

The subaltern Picchi of *Vaadivasaal* speaks through his action. Perhaps, it is not evident in his gestures but his action speaks. Picchi's action of taming Kaari is an action that shakes the powerful stature of Zameendar who has been enjoying the supremacy for generations together. When the dogma of established power stature is shaken, the subaltern and the beast face the consequences. The majestic Kaari is shot dead as it is not able to protect the unconquerable legacy of the Zameendar. And it is pathetic that such magnificent Kaari becomes the victim of man's vanity.

Though there are many predominant conflicts, the major conflict is between Zameendar and his pride. "If an animal's pride is hurt, it leads to destruction; it's the same with a man's pride too" (*Vaadivasaal* 81). In an interview, Chellappa said that he was inspired by Ernest Hemmingway's title *The Undefeated*. Perhaps, the indomitable power structure still remains undefeated but with few occasional ramifications.

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